



January 18, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the family farmer, rancher, and rural resident members of the National Farmers Union (NFU), I write to urge you to preserve access to affordable health care for rural Americans by opposing H.R. 2, which would repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Many of the law's provisions, listed below, have already gone into effect. Repealing this historic legislation would turn back the clock on these improvements and be detrimental to the health care of millions of Americans.

Rural Americans are affected the most by the shortcomings in our health care system. According to the National Rural Health Association, rural residents are less likely than their urban counterparts to have employer-provided health care. Furthermore, although one-quarter of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, only 10 percent of physicians practice in these areas. The ACA includes important incentives for primary care doctors and nurses to practice in rural, medically underserved areas and establishes increased payments for rural health care providers to help close this gap.

Since rural families are less likely to have access to health care, many of them choose to forgo treatment as well as avoid getting the preventive care they need, resulting in a higher mortality rate and higher out-of-pocket health expenses among rural residents. The ACA eliminated co-pays and deductibles for preventive services, ensuring that all Americans can take lifesaving, and cost-saving steps to protect their health.

Additional provisions of the ACA that have already begun to have a positive effect on rural Americans' access to health care include relief from the Medicare prescription drug "donut hole" for an aging rural population, coverage for uninsured Americans with pre-existing conditions, parents' ability to retain their children on their insurance policy until age 26, the elimination of lifetime and annual dollar limits, and a tax credit to help rural small business owners afford insurance for their employees.

NFU has been fighting for meaningful, comprehensive, universal health care reform for underserved rural populations for more than 20 years. I urge you to enforce the ACA, oppose H.R. 2, and continue moving toward a health care system that covers everyone in America. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Johnson".

Roger Johnson, President  
National Farmers Union